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STATE FOR EUR/WE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/21/2018

TAGS: PREL GG RS NL

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/GEORGIA: DUTCH SUPPORT EU STATEMENTS CONCERNED BY RUSSIAN UPGRADED RELATIONS WITH ABKHAZIA, SOUTH OSSETIA

REF: STATE 40673

Classified By: CDA Michael Gallagher, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The GONL supports the recent statement by the Slovenian EU Presidency noting "serious concern" over the April 15 Russian Presidential instructions enhancing relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. According to MFA Deputy Director for South Eastern and Eastern Europe Henk Voskamp, the Dutch view the latest EU statement as "firm," and correctly identifies Moscow "as the guilty party" in ratcheting up tensions in the region. Voskamp discussed these issues and reftel points with polmilooff on April 21. End summary.

¶2. (C) Voskamp described Russian plans to create "mechanisms" protecting the rights of Russian citizens in South Ossetia and Abkhazia as just the "latest provocation" aimed at unsettling Tbilisi. To a certain extent, he suggested such actions by Moscow should be expected, given Russian angst over discussion within NATO to enhance its relationship with Georgia. Voskamp also pointed to the Russian threat of "consequences" following Kosovo's independence, despite repeated attempts by the EU and the United States to argue that Kosovo is unique and does not set a precedent.

¶3. (C) At the same time, however, Voskamp said the Dutch had not received any signals suggesting Russia would take additional steps to recognize or annex Abkhazia and South Ossetia. He described Moscow as subscribing to a "good cop, bad cop" strategy, with Putin now playing the "good cop" by calling for normalized relations with Georgia.

¶4. (C) Voskamp said Tbilisi should be pleased with statements by the Slovenian EU Presidency and EU External Relations Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner, which clearly label Moscow as the provocateur. He noted the Dutch support peaceful resolution of the conflict, and will stress continued dialogue during the visit of several senior Dutch finance officials to Tbilisi immediately prior to the Georgian elections in late May.
Gallagher